



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CRITICAL NOTES

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE DIVINITY OF MAN?

In the interest of clear thought let a few words be allowed with reference to a topic which is often mooted in these days. I refer to the phrase "divinity of man," or kindred expressions frequently used in homiletical or theological discourses respecting the nature of men in general and that of Christ in particular. In attempting to restate christological doctrine so as to give more prominence to the humanity of Christ, it is sometimes thought that the difficulties besetting the older doctrine of the double nature of the Redeemer are avoided, and the essential truth guarded, by saying that Christ was a man who had more divinity in him than other men, or that he had as much divinity as it is possible for a man to have. In such statements the implication is that Jesus was a mere man, born into the world in a natural and ordinary way, but uniquely endowed, the uniqueness consisting in an unusual proportion of that divinity which is common to all men.

Let us examine this conception. By the term "divinity," as here used, must be meant the quality or characteristics of a divine being; it is practically the same as "deity." For those whom I have in mind are not Arians, who regard Christ as neither God nor man, but as a being forming a class by himself—superhuman, but created—and who speak of his "divinity," while denying his "deity." Moreover, the persons under consideration are not polytheists, in whose mind "divinity" might denote almost anything more or less superhuman. No; "divinity" and "humanity," as used in the christological discussion, are as antithetic as "God" and "man."

What, then, we need next to ask, is the difference between God and man? There is not a little nowadays written, whose object seems to be to minimize the difference. We are told not only about the divinity of man, but about the humanity of God; stress is laid on the essential likeness of the human and the divine nature. A modern writer has said: "To be God is to have more love than all besides, to be able to make greater sacrifices for the good of all, to have an infinite capacity to humble himself for others." Another prominent theologian (Ritschl) goes so far as to assert that love is the very essence of deity in such a sense that in our conception of God love logically precedes personality. Now, not to dwell on the absurdity

of imagining that love can be conceived as an entity existing apart from a person that loves, the point emphasized in these representations is that moral character—holiness—is the most essential and important thing both in God and in man. In man, it is confessed, this moral character is imperfect, whereas in God it is perfect; but as man advances in the possession of it, he becomes more and more divine; and some do not hesitate to take in the literal sense Athanasius's dictum that in the incarnation the Word was made human in order that man might be made divine, and speak of the just made perfect in the heavenly world as being real deities. This is simple polytheism, though less coarse than that of the ordinary heathen.

Now, that God and man are alike in having a rational and moral nature, and that this moral and rational nature is the noblest thing in both God and man—this is a very great, but a very trite, truth. The question, however, recurs, whether there is any specific difference between God and man; or is there a difference only of degree? It seems strange that there should be any occasion to ask such a question. If we were polytheists, it might be held that men and gods are not specifically different; but that in Protestant Christendom, where the strictest and purest monotheism is supposed to have its home, such a notion can have any countenance is amazing. It is an essential feature of Christian theism that God is conceived to be uncreated, and the Creator of all things; that his power sustains and energizes all things; that he is omnipotent and omniscient; and that, as a moral being, he is not only morally perfect, but is the Moral Ruler of the universe, to whom other moral beings are responsible, and to whom belongs the prerogative of pardon and of punishment. These attributes, not to attempt a more exhaustive statement, are distinctively divine attributes; they distinguish God absolutely from man. No amount of progress and growth on man's part can ever bring him to the possession of any of these attributes. In our mental and moral constitution we are akin to God, though even in this there is such a difference as might well be called specific; but in those other characteristics above mentioned no man has ever shared or ever can share. And it is those especially which constitute deity.

If we bear this simple and obvious truth in mind, it is easy to see what absurdity and nonsense is uttered in the talk about the divinity of man and the humanity of God. True, it may be said that God and man are in some respects akin. Yes; and so are the elephant and the snake. But if any one should seriously talk about the elephantineness of the snake and the serpentineness of the elephant, simply because they have some characteristics in common, we should have some doubt of his sanity. It is the

elephantineness of the elephant that distinguishes him from other animals, the snake included; and it is the serpentineness of the snake that distinguishes him from other animals, the elephant included. When we wish to assert or imply the *likeness* of the two, we do so by calling them both animals. To take a case in which the difference is less marked than the likeness, man and woman are different, though very much alike. But who would ever think of asserting or emphasizing the likeness by insisting on the femaleness of men and the maleness of women? Men and women are alike in that they are human beings; but men are not women, and women are not men. God and man are alike in that they are moral beings; but God is not man, and man is not God.

The application of these remarks to the christological problem is obvious. Whoever regards Christ as a mere man conceived and born just like other men, is a Unitarian of the Humanitarian type, and ought frankly to say so. No amount of vague and loose talk about the divinity of men in general and the superior divinity of Christ in particular, can change this fact. It is nothing but a juggling with words, which may serve to conceal the real fact from others, and may even deceive those who indulge in the talk. If by "divinity" is meant moral perfection, then, by saying that Christ had more divinity than any other man, one only says that he was the best man that ever lived; if by "divinity" is meant intellectual acumen, then the assertion is that he was the unique genius of the world. If that is meant, why not say so in plain terms, instead of bringing in this misleading word, which serves no useful purpose, and tends only to confuse the reader or hearer? One has a perfect right to hold that Jesus was nothing but a mere man, if he thinks the evidence warrants that judgment; but that is simply saying that he was human, and not divine. If, however, one is persuaded that the evidence shows Jesus to have been an altogether unique being, not simply one of the human race; and if, at the same time, one cannot be satisfied by considering him to be a being of some intermediate sort, neither God nor man; then the logical and natural conclusion should be that he was really divine, in the proper sense of the word. To say that he was nothing but a man, a man, however, endowed with an unparalleled amount of divinity, is to talk confusedly, and almost nonsensically. "Divinity" is an abstract term; it is our human conception of the qualities characteristic of the Divine Being. It is not a substance, that can be doled out to human beings in measurable proportions. There is no such thing as divinity apart from a divine being. If men can properly be said to have a greater or less amount of divinity in them, the language has no clear sense, unless it is meant that they have a certain amount of God in them—that the

Divine substance is parceled out among human beings in varying quantities. But this of course is not meant, unless the one using the language is an outright pantheist. What, then, is meant? The only answer is that the language is rhetorical, poetical, hyperbolical, but entirely unscientific. If one, in his desire to express emphatically his sense of the dignity of human nature, chooses to call men "divine," he may be permitted to do so, it being understood that his terminology is not to be understood literally and strictly. But when, in an attempt to solve a theological difficulty, such language is used ostensibly in its proper and exact sense, those who thus use it need to be reminded that the use is a plain abuse, clarifying nothing, and serving only to make confusion worse confounded.

C. M. MEAD

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

CAN THE HUMAN CHARACTER OF JESUS BE CALLED DIVINE?

Can one who does not believe in the supernatural origin of Jesus legitimately apply the term "divine" to his character? I believe that he can, with good and sufficient reason. But his reasons must be better than those given by many liberal theologians who in their own way ascribe divinity to the Prophet of Nazareth. It is not enough to say, as some of these thinkers do, that the character of Jesus is divine because it is an expression of the divine principle which pervades the universe and is manifest in a lesser degree in all other men. While there may be truth in such a statement, its effect is on the whole misleading, and the conservative may be excused for regarding it as a mere quibble. For what meaning is left to divinity, if we thus apply it to the whole sphere of humanity? Surely, if the word signifies anything, it is that which is differentiated from, and raised above, the merely human. In this sense Christians have used the word when they applied it to the Founder of their religion, and in this sense the modern thinker must use it if his ascription of divinity to Jesus is to have any real meaning.

The adjective "divine" may, however, be applied to Jesus upon grounds which, while not involving the miraculous, are sufficient to differentiate him from all other men and to give him a unique place among the figures of history. *For we may base the divinity we ascribe to Jesus, not upon a relation to God which he shares in common with all human beings, but upon a special experience which, as far as we know, has been given to no other man.*

Let us suppose that a man exists possessed of a profound religious insight, a consuming zeal for righteousness, and an entire devotion to the welfare of his fellows. Suppose further that such a man, as the result of